

VIETNAM STATION REPORT NO. 46/67 (26 AUGUST - 3 SEPTEMBER 1967)

A BARE AND BLESSED PLURALITY

THE FINAL FIGURES ARE NOT IN YET ON THE VOTING FOR PRESIDENT, AND NONE OF THE RESULTS HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED IN THE SENATORIAL RACE. BUT EVEN IF WE DID HAVE ALL OF THE FIGURES, IT IS TOO EARLY TO MAKE A DEFINITIVE JUDGMENT ON THE MEANING OF THE 3 SEPTEMBER ELECTIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, BECAUSE AS MUCH IS UNKNOWN AS IS KNOWN. WHAT FOLLOWS, THEN, IS MORE A SIGH OF RELIEF THAT EVERYTHING TURNED OUT SO WELL THAN THE WISE PRONOUNCEMENT OF A DISPASSIONATE JUDGE.

THE OBSTACLES TO THE CONDUCT, PROPER OR IMPROPER, OF ANY ELECTION AT ALL IN THIS WEARY, DISCOMBOBULATED COUNTRY ARE SO ENORMOUS AS TO BE LITTLE UNDERSTOOD. IN A COUNTRY WHERE GROEND TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN MOST MAJOR CITIES AND

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TOWNS REMAINS UNDER CONSTANT THREAT OF HOSTILE INTERDICTION, IT WAS NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH THE ELECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN 44 PROVINCES AND SIX AUTONOMOUS CITIES (DANANG, SAIGON, HUE, CAM RANH, DALAT, AND VUNG TAU). ALL TOLD, THIS MEANT THE SETTING UP AND STAFFING OF 8,808 POLLING PLACES.

EACH OF THE 11 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES AND 48 SENATORIAL SLATES WAS THEORETICALLY ENTITLED TO AN OBSERVER AT EACH POLLING PLACE, AND THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT WAS COMMITTED TO PAYING FOR THEM; FORTUNATELY, THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF OBSERVERS WAS KEPT WELL BELOW THE THEORETICAL MAXIMUM. EACH POLLING PLACE HAD TO BE PROVIDED WITH AN AMPLE STOCK OF BALLOTS FOR ALL OF THE CANDIDATES AND SLATES -- 460,200,000 BALLOTS IN ALL, IN ORDER THAT EACH VOTER COULD BE HANDED A HEFTY SHEAF OF 59 ON ENTERING. THIS MEANT MOVING ABOUT A THOUSAND TONS OF MATERIAL, OFTEN TO PLACES TOO SMALL TO FIND EXCEPT ON VERY LARGE-SCALE MAPS. AS A MEASURE OF THE PROBLEM, EACH OF THE EIGHT DISTRICTS OF BINH DINH PROVINCE (302,260 REGISTERED VOTERS) HAD TO BE PROVIDED WITH TWO 2 1/2 TON TRUCKS TO DISTRIBUTE THE BALLOTS AND COLLECT THEM AFTER VOTING.

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THE PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN EFFORT WAS NO SMALL AFFAIR EITHER. EACH PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AND SENATORIAL SLATE HAD THE RIGHT TO HAVE PRINTED AND DISTRIBUTED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE A NUMBER OF LEAFLETS AND POSTERS EXTOLLING THE CANDIDATES' VIRTUES AND PUBLICIZING THEIR SYMBOLS (USED AS IDENTIFICATION FOR THOSE MANY VOTERS WHO COULD NOT READ). ALL OF THIS AMOUNTED TO AN ADDITIONAL 144,720,000 PEICES OF PAPER, ENOUGH TO KEEP THE LANDSCAPE CLUTTERED AND THE SEWERS CLOGGED FOR SOME TIME. SURPRISINGLY, MOST OF THE POSTERS, LEAFLETS, AND BALLOTS GOT WHERE THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO, THANKS IN PART TO THE WONDROUS EFFICIENCY OF AMERICAN AIR SUPPORT.

THE VIET CONG AND NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY DID EVERYTHING THEY COULD TO MAKE THE ELECTIONS FAIL. FORTUNATELY, ALL THEY COULD DO WAS NOT VERY MUCH AS OPPOSED TO THE MASSIVE EFFORT OF THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT (WITH, OF COURSE, AMERICAN POWER IN THE BACKGROUND). BETWEEN 1800 HOURS, 2 SEPTEMBER, AND 0800 HOURS, 4 SEPTEMBER, THE VC KIDNAPPED 278 CIVILIANS, WOUNDED 160, AND KILLED 23 IN SOME 274 ATTACKS OF VARIOUS KINDS (THESE ARE MINISTRY OF SECURITY FIGURES).

[REDACTED] VINH LONG [REDACTED]

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"ELECTION DAY BROKE CLEAR AND BRIGHT, AFTER A WET AND STORMY NIGHT. PART OF THE PRECIPITATION CONSISTED OF RIFLE AND MORTAR ROUNDS, GRENADES, AND MINES ..... WHEREAS, DURING LAST YEAR'S CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, LARGE CROWDS HAD BUILT UP AT THE POLLS ONE HOUR BEFORE THEY OPENED, THIS YEAR FOUND PEOPLE STAYING AWAY IN A WAIT-AND-SEE POSTURE..... THOUGH OFFICIAL SOURCES STATED THAT ALL ROADS WERE OPEN AND THAT TRAFFIC WAS FLOWING AS USUAL, THE BUSES WERE NOT ON THE ROADS UNTIL THE MORNING HAD MATURED. BY 1000 HOURS, HOWEVER, MUCH OF THE WAIT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE HAD EVAPORATED AND THE PEOPLE WERE COMING TO THE POLLS IN MOUNTING NUMBERS....." IN ANOTHER PROVINCE, LONG KHANH, A VILLAGE WHICH HAD FOUR INHABITANTS WOUNDED WHEN IT CAME UNDER MORTAR FIRE IN MID-MORNING, LATER REPORTED A 97 PERCENT TURNOUT AT THE POLLS.

IF THE VC FAILED TO MAKE MUCH OF AN IMPRESSION ON THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE POPULATION, THEY WERE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN THE CASE OF THE AMERICAN OBSERVERS SENT OVER BY PRESIDENT JOHNSON. GOVERNORS MURPHY OF CALIFORNIA AND GUY OF NORTH DAKOTA VISITED A POLLING PLACE IN TUY HOA CITY WHERE AN EXPLOSION SEVERAL HOURS EARLIER HAD KILLED THREE AND WOUNDED

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APPROXIMATELY 40; THEIR REACTION TO THE NEWS THAT SOME OF THE WOUNDED LATER RETURNED TO VOTE WAS DESCRIBED AS "FAVORABLE."

OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE WERE THE RESULTS IN IV CORPS, THE DELTA, WHERE ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE POPULATION OF THE COUNTRY LIVES (INCLUDING 1,694,944 REGISTERED VOTERS OUT OF A COUNTRYWIDE TOTAL OF 5,853,251). HERE, THE MAIN BURDEN OF SECURITY IS CARRIED BY THE VIETNAMESE THEMSELVES, SINCE AMERICAN GROUND TROOPS ARE LIMITED TO ONE INFANTRY BRIGADE.

[REDACTED] "GENERAL

VOTER REACTION APPEARED TO BE THAT OF PARTICIPATING IN SOME FESTIVE OCCASION ..... WE ARE IMPRESSED BY THE MAGNITUDE OF THE GVN EFFORT TO ENSURE ORDERLY ELECTIONS IN THE DELTA, AND CONSIDER THE ELECTIONS A RESOUNDING VOTE OF CONFIDENCE BY THE PEOPLE FOR ..... THE CLOSEST THING TO ORDER AND STABILITY THAT THEY HAVE SEEN IN QUITE SOME TIME."

AS OF 1800 HOURS, 4 SEPTEMBER, THE 83 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS WHO TURNED OUT SEEM TO HAVE GIVEN THE MILITARY THIEU/KY TICKET A PLURALITY OF ABOUT 35 PERCENT. (UNOFFICIALLY, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THIS MAY LATER DECLINE TO ABOUT 32 PERCENT.) THE PROBABLE SECOND-RUNNER, WHEN ALL OF THE RESULTS ARE IN,

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WILL BE A DARK HORSE, TRUONG DINH DZU, WHO HAD BEEN EXPECTED TO TRAIL FORTH OR FIFTH. TWO FAMILIAR OLD FACES, BOTH IN THEIR 50'S, TRAN VAN HUONG AND PHAN KHAC SUU, APPEAR TO BE COMING IN THIRD AND FOURTH. SOME QUICK ARITHMETIC INDICATES THAT, IF DZU, HUONG, AND SUU HAD BEEN ABLE TO UNITE, THEY MIGHT HAVE WON. AN EQUALLY SUPERFICIAL PROGNOSIS FOR THE FUTURE IS THAT, WHILE UNABLE TO UNITE IN RUNNING, THEY MAY FIND IT EASIER TO GET TOGETHER IN NEGATING EFFORTS OF THE NEW REGIME TOWARD CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRESS. WE SHALL BE WATCHING CAREFULLY FOR INDICATIONS OF A UNIFIED CIVILIAN OPPOSITION.

WHILE WE NATURALLY TAKE SATISFACTION OF THE ELECTIONS' OUTCOME, IT BY NO MEANS SIGNALS AN END TO VIETNAM'S DIFFICULTIES; RATHER, IT PRESAGES PROBLEMS OF A NEW SORT, IN SOME WAYS AS DIFFICULT OR MORE SO TO DEAL WITH AS THOSE WE HAVE FACED IN THE PAST. THE NEW LEGISLATURE HAS TEETH, AND NOTHING

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IN THE COMPORTMENT OVER THE PAST YEAR OF ITS FUTURE MEMBERS INDICATES THAT THEY WILL BE AFRAID TO BITE. OPERATING AS THEY WILL BE WITHOUT ANY FRAMEWORK OF ORGANIZED POLITICAL PARTIES, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT WHAT SORT OF AN INFLUENCE THE LEGISLATORS WILL EXERT ON THE FUTURE OF THEIR COUNTRY. AT THIS POINT, THERE IS NO REASON FOR PESSIMISM, BUT RAMPANT OPTIMISM WOULD BE EQUALLY UNJUSTIFIED. WHAT IS CERTAIN IS THAT THE FUTURE OF VIETNAM DOES DEPEND ON A WISE AND FORCEFUL EXERCISE OF PRESIDENTIAL POWER BY THIEU (WHO HAS NOT PREVIOUSLY SHOWN HIMSELF TO BE FORCEFUL), AND ON THE NEW PRESIDENT'S ABILITY TO WORK IN CLOSE HARMONY WITH HIS VICE PRESIDENT (WHICH HE HAS NOT PREVIOUSLY DONE, EITHER). OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE WILL BE THE ABILITY OF THE TWO EXECUTIVE LEADERS TO ADAPT THEMSELVES TO WORKING WITH THIS NEW PHENOMENON, TO BOTH OF THEM TOTALLY UNFAMILIAR, A TUMULTUOUSLY INDEPENDENT-MINDED LEGISLATURE.

DZU: ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN

OF ALL OF THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES, IT WAS TRUONG DINH DZU WHO SEEMS TO HAVE ANNOYED THIEU AND KY THE MOST DURING THE RECENT CAMPAIGN. AT ONE POINT, KY EXCLAIMED THAT, IF THAT

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"ANIMAL" DZU WERE ELECTED, HE (KY) WOULD BUILD A CAGE FOR HIM. SINCE DZU NOW OFFICIALLY HOLDS 17.4 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL VOTE, AND MAY END UP WITH ABOUT 22 PERCENT, THE CAGE MAY HAVE TO BE A BIG ONE.

IN THE 50 YEARS SINCE HE WAS BORN IN BINH DINH, DZU HAS MANAGED TO GET AROUND QUITE A BIT, AND HAS NEVER BEEN ACCUSED OF BEING BASHFUL. HE WAS EDUCATED IN FRANCE; VISITED THE UNITED STATES; BECAME A DISTRICT GOVERNOR OF ROTARY INTERNATIONAL; JOINED SOCIETIES FAVORING FRIENDSHIP WITH AMERICANS, JAPANESE, FRENCH, AND CHINESE; AND PARTICIPATED IN BOTH THE BUDDHIST AND CONFUCIANIST ASSOCIATIONS. IN THE PERIOD BEFORE THE ELECTION, HE CLAIMED <sup>CIA</sup>~~SECRET~~ SUPPORT, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] HE ALSO TOLD [REDACTED]

THAT HE WAS BACKED BY A LARGE AMERICAN FIRM, PACIFIC ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS. HIS SON REPORTED THAT DZU HAD BEEN SOLICITING HELP IN THE UNITED STATES, WHERE HE HAD HAD PROMISES FROM "SOME PROFESSORS," AND WAS ALSO GOING TO GET HELP FROM ESSO, WHICH HAD OFFERED HIM THE SERVICES OF A PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER. DZU HIMSELF STATED THAT HE HAD AN EXCELLENT CHANCE OF BEING ELECTED BECAUSE THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT HAD GIVEN

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HIM 150,000,000 PIASERS FOR HIS CAMPAIGN. AMONG HIS COMPATRIOTS, HE HAS CLAIMED SUPPORT FROM THICH TJZ QUANG AND THE EXTREMIST ~~B~~ADHISTS, THE CATHOLICS, THE HOA HAO, THE CAO DAI, AND THE VIETNAMESE LABOR CONFEDERATION.

DZU'S RALLYING CRY IN THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN "PEACE" AND THE SYMBOL OF HIS TICKET IS THE "WHITE DOVE". THE FIVE SENATORIAL SLATES WITH WHICH HE IS ASSOCIATED BEAR THE NAMES "PEACE ON EARTH," "PEACE AND PROSPERITY," "PEACE AND CONTENTMENT I, II, AND III." HIS FULL-PAGE CAMPAIGN AD PUBLISHED THE DAY BEFORE THE ELECTION WAS CONINED ENTIRELY TO THE PEACE ISSUE, AND OUTLINED A PEACE PLAN WHICH INCLUDED THE UNCONDITIONAL CESSATION OF BOMBING IN NORTH VIETNAM, A TOTAL CEASE-FIRE SOUTH OF THE 17TH PARALLEL; TALKS WITH "OUR ALLIES," HANOI, AND THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT; AND THE RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE.

IN AND OF THEMSELVES, DZU'S PROPOSALS ARE NOT OBJECTIONABLE. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT THE VC HAVE REGARDED DZU'S PLATFORM WITH SUCH FAVOR THAT THEY HAVE GIVEN HIM THEIR SUPPORT. FROM TAY NINH, FOR EXAMPLE, [REDACTED] REPORTS THAT "THERE HAD BEEN SUBSTANTIAL VC PROPAGANDA IN THE PROVINCE ORDERING THE PEOPLE TO

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NOTE FOR THE DZU-CHIEU TICKET AND IT IS ASSUMED THAT THIS PROPAGANDIZING HAD SOME EFFECT....." WHATEVER THE CAUSE, DZU-CHIEU WON IN TAY NINH BY 39,947 VOTES TO THIEU-KY'S 30,830. A SIMILAR REPORT FROM KIEN GIANG TOLD OF A VC DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEETING ON 14 AUGUST AT WHICH A VC OFFICIAL EXHORTED THE PERSONS ATTENDING " TO PROPAGANDIZE EARNESTLY ..... " THAT THE VOTERS CAN UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION AND CAST THEIR BALLOTS FOR" DZU.

ALL OF THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT DZU IS A COMMUNIST OR EVEN A NON-COMMUNIST SYMPATHIZER WITH THE VIET CONG. BUT A MAN WHO CAN RUN AS A STRONG NATIONALIST ON A TICKET OF PEACE AND VIOLENT ANTI-MILITARISM, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY CLAIMING THE SUPPORT OF [REDACTED] STANDARD OIL, CERTAINLY GIVES EVIDENCE OF A SUPPLE, SUBTLE CHARACTER, ONE HARDLY KNOWS WHAT TO EXPECT OF HIM.

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IN SUM, THE ELECTION WAS A SUCCESS. IT WAS SUCCESSFUL PARTLY BECAUSE IT WAS NOT TOO REPEAT TOO SUCCESSFUL; THE MILITARY TICKET WON (WHICH WAS GOOD), BUT NOT BY A MAJORITY (WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN BAD). TO CONCLUDE, WE MIGHT QUOTE STATEMENTS MADE BY TWO PROMINENT AMERICAN OBSERVERS. GOVERNOR HUGHES OF NEW

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JERSEY. "I'VE SPENT ANOTHER DAY WITHOUT SEEING EVIDENCE  
THAT WOULD LEAD TO THE PRESUMPTION OF FRAUD OR WRONGDOING.  
IT WAS A VERY INSPIRING DAY ..... IT WAS AMAZED AT THE ELECTION  
ACTIVITY..... I SAW 150 PEOPLE BEING INSTRUCTED IN HOW TO VOTE.....  
YOU COULDN'T GET EIGHT PEOPLE TOGETHER LIKE THAT IN JERSEY.....  
AND, FINALLY, WHITNEY YOUNG OF THE URBAN LEAGUE: "I WAS  
IMPRESSED WITH THE INTEREST AND ENTHUSIASM ..... HERE WE  
WERE IN A CITY (PHAN THIE) THAT HAD JUST HAD ROCKETS THROWN  
IN, AND THERE WERE PEOPLE PARADING ..... I'VE BEEN MORE  
CONCERNED ABOUT THE FAIRNESS OF THE PRESS THAN THE FAIRNESS  
OF THE ELECTION."

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